

PARIS. GR. 102:
A RARE ILLUSTRATED ACTS
OF THE APOSTLES

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For Hugo Buchthal

A lively discussion followed the presentation of my paper, "The Conversion of St. Paul in the Carolingian Bibles," at the 1972 Dumbarton Oaks Symposium.¹ I had proposed that the illuminators of the ninth-century Vivian and San Paolo Bibles² had constructed their frontispieces to the Pauline Epistles by assembling scenes from a Byzantine cycle of the Acts of the Apostles; and several members of the audience questioned this idea, asserting that no narrative illustration of the Book of Acts had been produced in Byzantium during the Middle Ages. It is true that illuminated Greek manuscripts of the Acts are extremely rare, but several do exist. Twelve miniatures illustrate the Acts text in the Rockefeller McCormick New Testament (Chicago, The University of Chicago Library),³ and narrative depictions survive in at least two Byzantine manuscripts of the Book of Acts itself.⁴

One of these manuscripts was first published in 1966 by Hugo Buchthal.⁵ This twelfth-century codex of Acts and Epistles owned by the Robinson Trust in London is illustrated with a single frontispiece miniature composed of three scenes showing the Conversion and Martyrdom of St. Paul. From his analysis of these scenes Buchthal concluded that the frontispiece was compiled from a narrative cycle of the Acts; and comparisons with other representations led him to propose that the same Byzantine cycle had been the source of various Greek depictions and of certain episodes in the San Paolo Bible. Recently, Kurt Weitzmann presented other material that supports Buchthal's hypothetical model for the Acts.⁶ Weitzmann's principal evidence consists of depictions of the Acts story found in other contexts, such as the seventeen scenes that occur among the marginal illustrations in the ninth-century *Sacra Parallela* of John of Damascus (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. gr. 923).⁷ But Weitzmann also introduced into the discussion a second

¹ The substance of that paper will be included in my forthcoming book on the ninth-century frontispiece Bibles.

² Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. lat. 1, fol. 386v. Cf. W. Köhler, *Die karolingischen Miniaturen. Die Schule von Tours* (Berlin, 1930-33), II, 219f. The Bible of the monastery of S. Paolo fuori le mura, Rome, fol. 310v. Cf. J. E. Gaehde, "The Turonian Sources of the Bible of San Paolo Fuori Le Mura in Rome," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 5 (1971), 386ff. The Conversion of St. Paul in these manuscripts and in other Byzantine and Western works has been discussed by L. Eelen, "The Illustration of the Pauline Epistles" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Toronto, 1972).

³ *The Rockefeller McCormick New Testament*, 3 vols., eds. E. J. Goodspeed, D. W. Riddle, H. R. Willoughby (Chicago, 1932). An additional four miniatures in the Acts section have been lost, Willoughby, *op. cit.*, III: *The Miniatures*, 319ff. A late twelfth-century date is suggested in *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections: An Exhibition in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann* (Princeton, 1973), 162ff.

⁴ Other Byzantine manuscripts of Acts exist which contain non-narrative illustrations, for example, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. suppl. gr. 1262.

⁵ "Some Representations from the Life of St. Paul in Byzantine and Carolingian Art," *Tortulae: Studien zu altchristlichen und byzantinischen Monumenten* (Rome, 1966), 43ff.

⁶ "The Selection of Texts for Cyclic Illustration in Byzantine Manuscripts" (in press).

⁷ K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinische Buchmalerei* (Berlin, 1935), 80. Weitzmann now favors a Palestinian origin for Paris. gr. 923 and a date in the first half of the ninth century; cf. his "Ivory

illustrated Book of Acts—the twelfth-century codex in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, gr. 102.⁸ Like the Robinson Trust book, the Paris manuscript contains Acts and Epistles preceded by a narrative frontispiece. It poses problems analogous to those presented by the London codex; and it is my hope to honor Professor Buchthal on his sixty-fifth birthday by examining the significance of Paris. gr. 102 for the question of Byzantine illustration of the Acts of the Apostles.

The narrative illustrations in the Paris Acts and Epistles are limited to four small scenes gathered onto a single frontispiece leaf, folio 7^v (fig. 1).⁹ The first scene depicts the Healing of the Lame Man described in Acts 3:1–8:

“One day at three in the afternoon, the hour of prayer, Peter and John were on their way up to the temple. Now a man who had been a cripple from birth used to be carried there and laid by the gate of the temple called ‘Beautiful Gate,’ to beg from people as they went in. When he saw Peter and John on their way into the temple he asked for charity. But Peter fixed his eyes on him, as did John also, and said, ‘Look at us.’ Expecting a gift from them, the man was all attention. And Peter said, ‘I have no silver or gold; but what I have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’ Then he grasped him by the right hand and pulled him up; and at once his feet and ankles grew strong; he sprang up, stood on his feet, and started to walk.”

The two Apostles are represented beckoning to the crippled man, who is shown, at the right, kneeling before the temple door. This event is rarely represented in Byzantine art. It is found in the Paris manuscript of the *Sacra Parallela* (fig. 2) where it is the first of three scenes of apostolic miracles depicted on folio 213^r.¹⁰ As in Paris. gr. 102, Peter and John gesture toward the crippled beggar, who, because of the limited space, is shown standing. The scene is also included in the Rockefeller McCormick New Testament (fol. 108^v; fig. 3).¹¹ Here the artist combined it with the subsequent moment in the narrative by showing John entering the temple, but the basic action of Peter summoning the kneeling man to stand up and walk is very close to the depictions in the two Paris manuscripts.

It is not in illuminated books, however, but among the mosaics of Norman Sicily that the closest parallels to the unusual representation are found.¹² The cycles of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo and of the Cathedral of Monreale both include depictions of the Healing of the Lame Man. In Palermo (fig. 4)

Sculpture of the Macedonian Renaissance,” *Kolloquium über spätantike und frühmittelalterliche Skulptur*, II (Mainz a/Rh., 1970), 11.

⁸ *Byzance et la France médiévale* (catalogue of an exhibition), Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris, 1958), 19; V. Lazarev, *Storia della pittura bizantina* (Turin, 1967), 253.

⁹ Paris. gr. 102 also represents the Deesis in a medallion of the headpiece on folio 8^r.

¹⁰ The others illustrate Acts 5:13–14 and 28:8–9. I owe this information to the unpublished study of the *Sacra Parallela* by Kurt Weitzmann.

¹¹ Willoughby, *op. cit.*, III, 243 ff.

¹² Cf. O. Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily* (London, 1948), 294 ff., and E. Kitzinger, *The Mosaics of Monreale* (Palermo, 1960), 33 ff.

the beggar kneels before the Beautiful Gate and responds to Peter's summons by dropping one of his hand-crutches. Because of the narrow space, John, who accompanies Peter, was placed around the corner on the west wall. In Monreale (fig. 5) the episode occupies an entire lunette, and the two Apostles perform the miracle together. Paris. gr. 102, therefore, provides additional evidence of a strong Byzantine component in the Sicilian apostolic cycles and suggests that the ultimate source of the mosaics may have been an illustrated Book of Acts.

The illustration of St. Peter's Release from Prison supports this conclusion. Acts 12:6-8 describes the event:

"On the very night before Herod had planned to bring him forward, Peter was asleep between two soldiers, secured by two chains, while outside the doors sentries kept guard over the prison. All at once, an angel of the Lord stood there, and the cell was ablaze with light. He tapped Peter on the shoulder and woke him. 'Quick! Get up,' he said, and the chains fell away from his wrists. The angel then said to him, 'Do up your belt and put your sandals on.' He did so. 'Now wrap your cloak around you and follow me'."

In accord with the text, Paris. gr. 102 shows Peter in prison, seated and chained between two guards; he is startled by the angel who approaches him from the left. In the Chicago New Testament (fig. 7)¹³ the composition is reversed and abbreviated; only the two principal actors are present. As in the Paris depiction, Peter wears a short tunic. In both Palermo and Monreale (figs. 6 and 8) Peter is more dignified and, despite the implications of the Bible text, he is fully clothed. In their principal elements, however, the representations conform well to the miniatures. The imprisoned Apostle, seated and bound, is surprised by the angel, who flies in from the side. Especially significant is the fact that in three of the depictions the guards are shown asleep, for this is not specified in the text. Palermo and Paris. gr. 102, which show Peter between only two watchmen, are closer to the Acts narrative than is Monreale. The angel in Monreale, however, may be more faithful to the pictorial model than is its counterpart in Palermo. The latter moves toward Peter with a jaunty stride, one leg crossing the other; while the figure in Monreale, like the angels in Paris. gr. 102 and the Rockefeller McCormick New Testament, approaches the saint with legs and knees apart.¹⁴

St. James's martyrdom, the third scene in Paris. gr. 102, is recounted immediately before the release of St. Peter in the twelfth chapter of Acts:

"It was about this time that King Herod attacked certain members of the church. He beheaded James, the brother of John, and then, when he saw that the Jews approved, proceeded to arrest Peter also."

¹³ Fol. 19v. Willoughby, *op. cit.*, III, 265 ff.

¹⁴ This is one of several indications that the Monreale mosaicist consulted the basic model as well as the nearby mosaic cycle in Palermo.

The depiction is as schematic as the text. Herod watches from a palace window as the young executioner grasps James's hair and raises his sword to decapitate the Apostle. The episode is not included in other Acts cycles; but it is represented in at least two other Byzantine manuscripts. The Beheading of James appears among the twelve scenes of apostolic martyrdom in the ninth-century *Homilies* of Gregory Nazianzus in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. gr. 510, fol. 32^v; fig. 9).¹⁵ Because of their conventional nature, it is difficult to decide how these representations are related to one another.¹⁶ But the general composition of the miniatures is similar and both show the executioner holding the top of James's head. The depiction in the tenth-century *Menologion* of Basil II (Vatican, cod. gr. 1613, p. 185; fig. 10)¹⁷ is even more difficult to analyze. In the Vatican manuscript James's Beheading takes place in a mountainous landscape and Herod is not shown; but the martyr is almost identical with the figure in Paris. gr. 510 and the executioner's gestures are very similar to those in Paris. gr. 102. It is likely, therefore, that the three representations were derived from a common prototype. Their conformity to the text, the occurrence of the composition in one Acts manuscript, and the reliance of Paris. gr. 510 on an Acts model for the scene of the Conversion of St. Paul,¹⁸ suggest strongly that the prototype was in a narrative Acts cycle.

The final scene in Paris. gr. 102, the Stoning of St. Stephen, shows the youthful martyr on one knee praying to God as two men pelt him with rocks. In accord with Acts 7:57–60, Saul witnesses the execution:

"Then, they made one rush at him and, flinging him out of the city, set about stoning him. The witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. So they stoned Stephen, and as they did so, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried aloud, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them,' and with that he died. And Saul was among those who approved his murder."

The Stoning of St. Stephen is also represented in the Rockefeller McCormick New Testament;¹⁹ but, because it is severely abbreviated, its relationship to the Paris depiction is uncertain. There is no doubt, however, about the representation in the Vatican *Menologion* (p. 275; fig. 11). Saul, one of the executioners, and St. Stephen are nearly identical to the figures in Paris. gr. 102.²⁰

The earliest surviving Greek representation of the Stoning appears in the ninth-century *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes in the Vatican

¹⁵ Fol. 32^v. H. Omont, *Manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1929), 10ff.

¹⁶ Buchthal, *op. cit.*, 43, considered the scene of the Martyrdom of St. Paul in the Robinson Trust manuscript of Acts and Epistles to be a conventional depiction and cited the similar scene in the Paris Gregory.

¹⁷ P. 185; *Il Menologio di Basilio II* (Turin, 1907), 50.

¹⁸ Cf. Buchthal, *op. cit.*, 45.

¹⁹ Willoughby, *op. cit.*, III, 251ff.

²⁰ The same composition was also used to illustrate Psalm 34:20–21 in the Theodore Psalter (London, British Museum, Add. 19,352, fol. 38^r); S. Der Nersessian, *L'illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen Age*, II, Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques, 5 (Paris, 1970).

(cod. gr. 699, fol. 82^v; fig. 12).²¹ The Cosmas miniature is organized as a symmetrical composition focused on Stephen; but it seems to have been derived from a narrative scene similar to the one in Paris. gr. 102. The stone-thrower at the far left, Stephen's half-kneeling pose, and the seated figure of Saul are features shared by the miniature in the Vatican Cosmas and the later representations. The eleventh-century Cosmas manuscript in Florence (Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, cod. Plut. 9,28, fol. 170^v; fig. 13)²² reflects the narrative source more faithfully. Its scene of the Stoning reads from left to right and is virtually identical to the depictions in the Paris Acts and Epistles and the Vatican Menologion. The Florence Cosmas also illustrates, as a separate miniature (fol. 170^r; fig. 14), the moment just prior to Stephen's death, when the executioners laid their coats at Saul's feet. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the scenes in the Florence Cosmas were based on a richly illustrated manuscript of the Acts. The question is whether the narrative elements in the Florence manuscript were features of the Cosmas archetype as well (altered in Vat. gr. 699) or whether the eleventh-century illuminator refashioned the Cosmas model after a new narrative source.²³ The problem is complicated further by the third Cosmas manuscript, the eleventh-century copy preserved on Mt. Sinai (cod. 1186).²⁴ The Sinai manuscript illustrates the Stoning of St. Stephen (fol. 128^r) as a symmetrical composition very similar to the Vatican miniature; but it also represents the episode of the Laying of Coats before Saul (fol. 127^v). Because the scenes of the Stoning of St. Stephen in the Vatican and Sinai manuscripts are composed of elements found in their original disposition in the Florence codex, it is likely that the latter is the most faithful witness of the Cosmas archetype. The Cosmas archetype, which apparently was created during the sixth century,²⁵ probably contained two illustrations from the seventh chapter of Acts as well as depictions of the Conversion of St. Paul based on the ninth chapter. These scenes must have been copied from a narrative Acts cycle. Only a full study of the Cosmas illustrations, however, will reveal the relationship of the several Middle Byzantine copies to the sixth-century original.

The four scenes in the Paris manuscript of Acts and Epistles are limited but precious evidence of the Byzantine Acts tradition. Their connection to earlier illustrations establishes that they were not invented for this manuscript; and it is improbable that the twelfth-century illuminator garnered the four depictions from various secondary sources such as the Cosmas and Menologion

²¹ Fol. 82^v. Cf. K. Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 1970), 142; Buchthal, *op. cit.*, 44; and Gaehde, *op. cit.*, 387, for other Acts scenes in the Vatican Cosmas.

²² Cf. *Byzantine Art, An European Art* (catalogue of an exhibition) (Athens, 1964), no. 366, p. 346f. For a recent discussion of the Old Testament illustrations in the Cosmas manuscripts, consult D. Mouriki-Charalambous, "The Octateuch Miniatures of the Byzantine Manuscripts of Cosmas Indicopleustes" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1970).

²³ This may have been the case for certain Old Testament scenes; cf. Mouriki-Charalambous, *op. cit.*, 164ff. and *passim*.

²⁴ Weitzmann, *Byzantinische Buchmalerei*, 58f.; and Mouriki-Charalambous, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

²⁵ *Byzantine Art, An European Art*, p. 346. Of the three Cosmas manuscripts, the Florence codex is also the only one which properly depicts the scene of Ananias leading Saul into Damascus (fol. 171^v).

manuscripts. The relationship of the Paris. gr. 102 scenes to those in the Rockefeller McCormick New Testament is also significant; but their correspondence to episodes in the *Sacra Parallela*, the Cosmas manuscripts, and the mosaics in Sicily is perhaps the most important indication that they were excerpted from an extensive narrative cycle. The analysis of the depictions in Paris. gr. 102 has led us to many of the monuments shown by Buchthal to be related to the Robinson Trust manuscript of the Acts and Epistles: the Cosmas manuscripts, the Paris *Homilies* of Gregory, the Rockefeller McCormick New Testament, and the Sicilian mosaics. It also expands this group to include the ninth-century illustrations in the *Sacra Parallela*. The interrelationships of these several Acts cycles have yet to be studied in complete detail and their connections to Western depictions must still be examined.²⁶ But Paris. gr. 102 increases the likelihood that Buchthal was correct when he proposed that the several cycles were derived from a richly illustrated Greek Book of Acts. The Chicago, London, and Paris manuscripts are among the more modest reflections of this pictorial tradition; they are, however, extremely important because they preserve the illustrations within the original textual context.²⁷

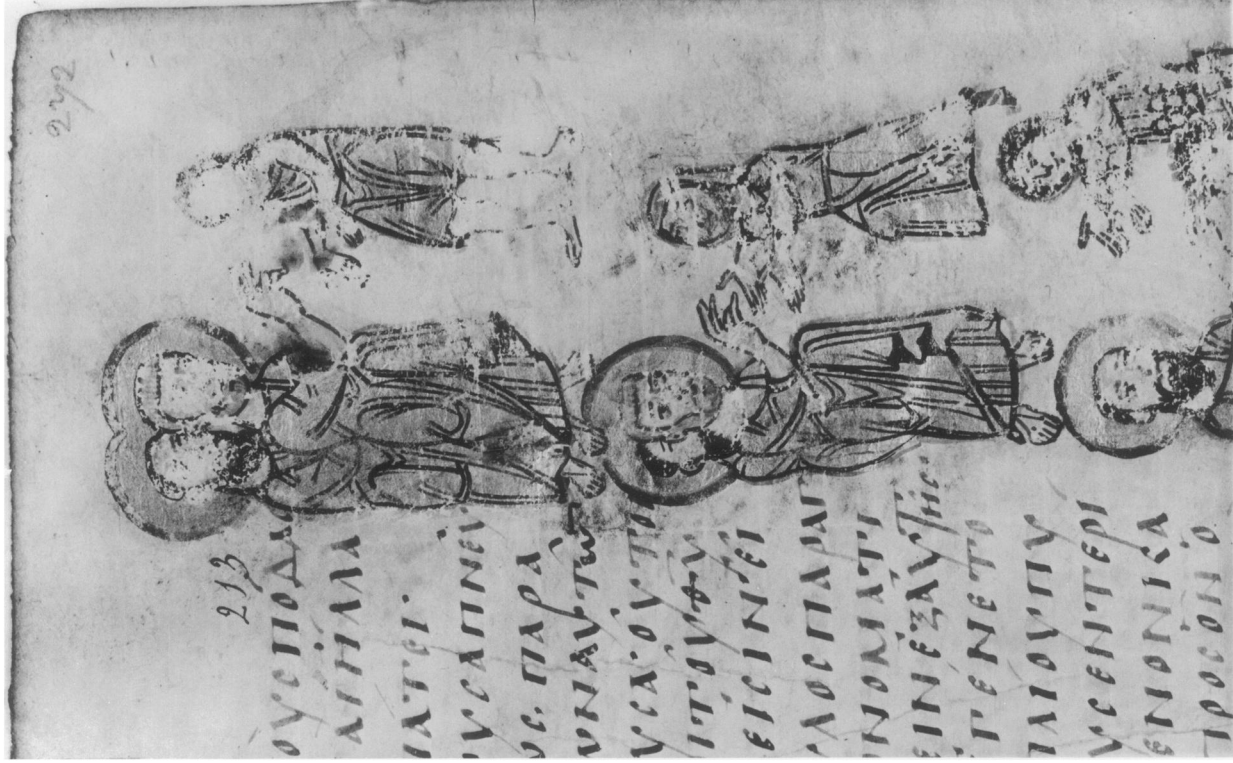
The University of Chicago

²⁶ A few comparisons can be made between Paris. gr. 102 and Western representations. The Healing of the Lame Man, illustrated in the thirteenth-century Vercelli Rotulus (C. Cipolla, "La pergamena rappresentante le antiche pitture della Basilica di S. Eusebio in Vercelli," *Miscellanea di Storia Italiana*, 37 [1901], 3ff. and pl. 1; and R. W. Scheller, *A Survey of Medieval Model Books* [Haarlem, 1963], 95ff.), shows Peter and John leaning toward the crippled man at the "Beautiful Gate." The Stoning of St. Stephen in the Basilica of San Paolo f. l. m. in Rome (S. Waetzoldt, *Die Kopien des 17. Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien in Rom* [Vienna, 1964], fig. 368) may also have been derived from a Greek model.

²⁷ I wish to thank Prof. Kurt Weitzmann for permitting me the use of his facilities for the study of manuscripts at Princeton and Mr. Gary Vikan for discussing with me the date of Paris. gr. 102.



1. Paris, Bibl. Nat., gr. 102, fol. 7v, Acts Frontispiece



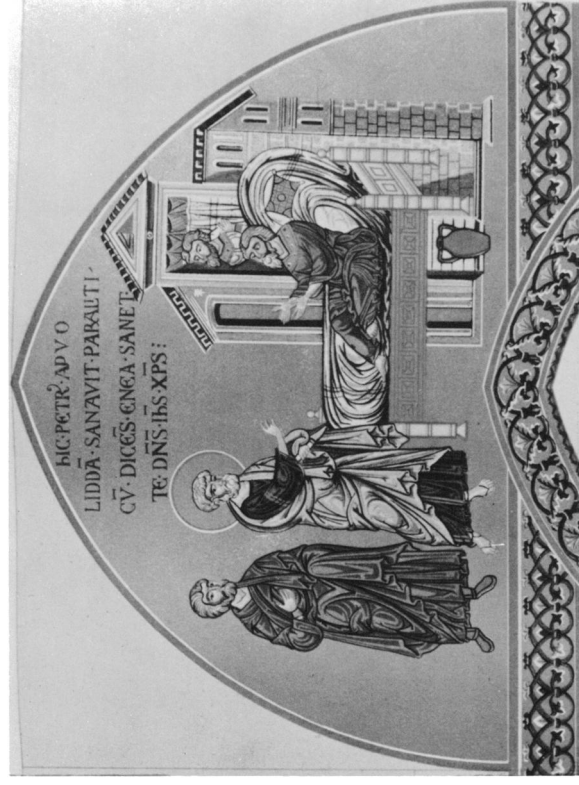
2. Paris, Bibl. Nat., gr. 923, fol. 213r,
Sacra Parallela of John of Damascus



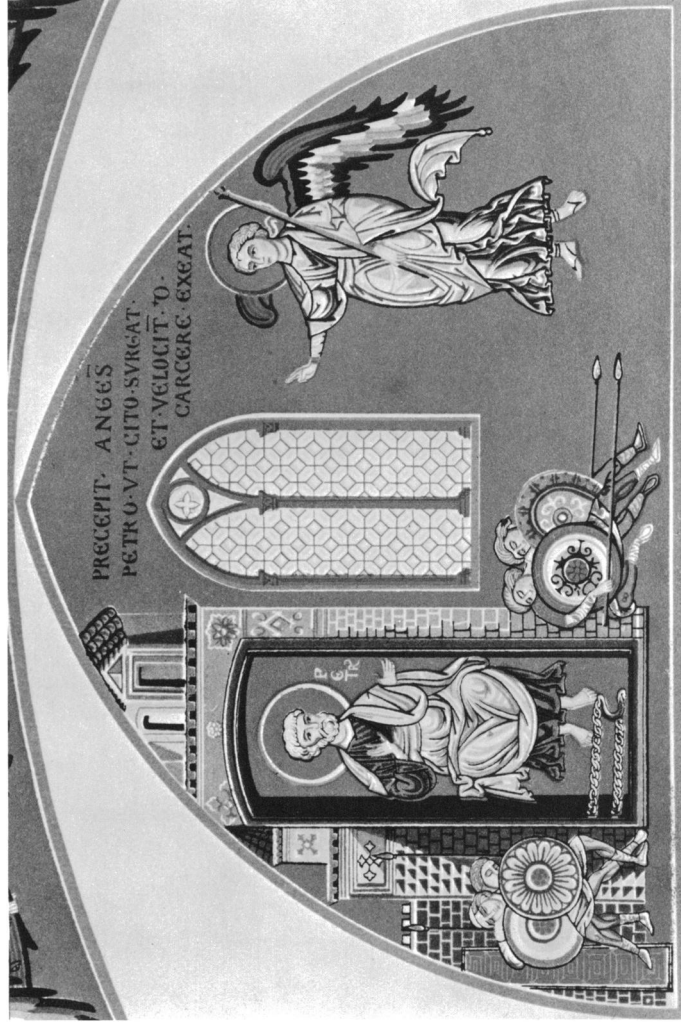
3. Chicago, University of Chicago Library, Rockefeller McCormick
 New Testament, fol. 108v



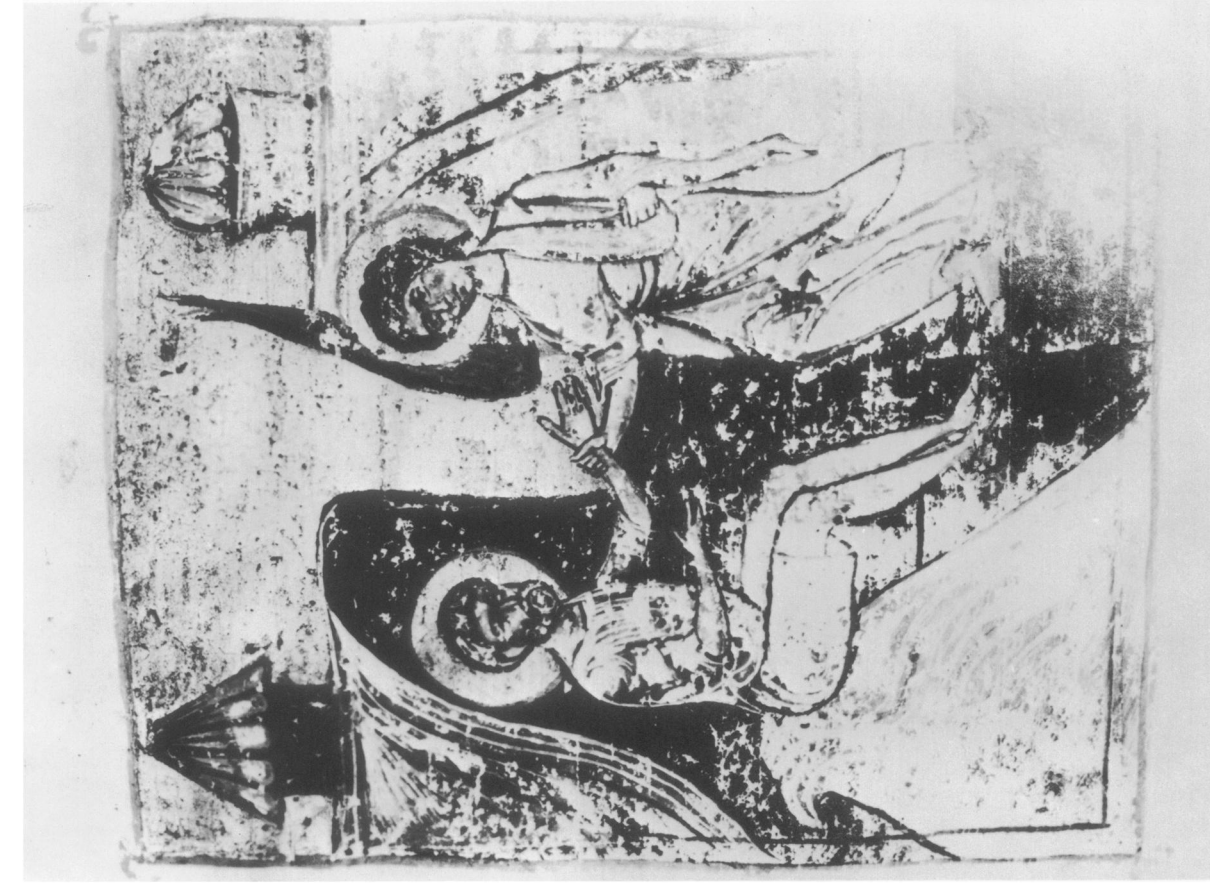
4. Palermo, Cappella Palatina. Mosaic



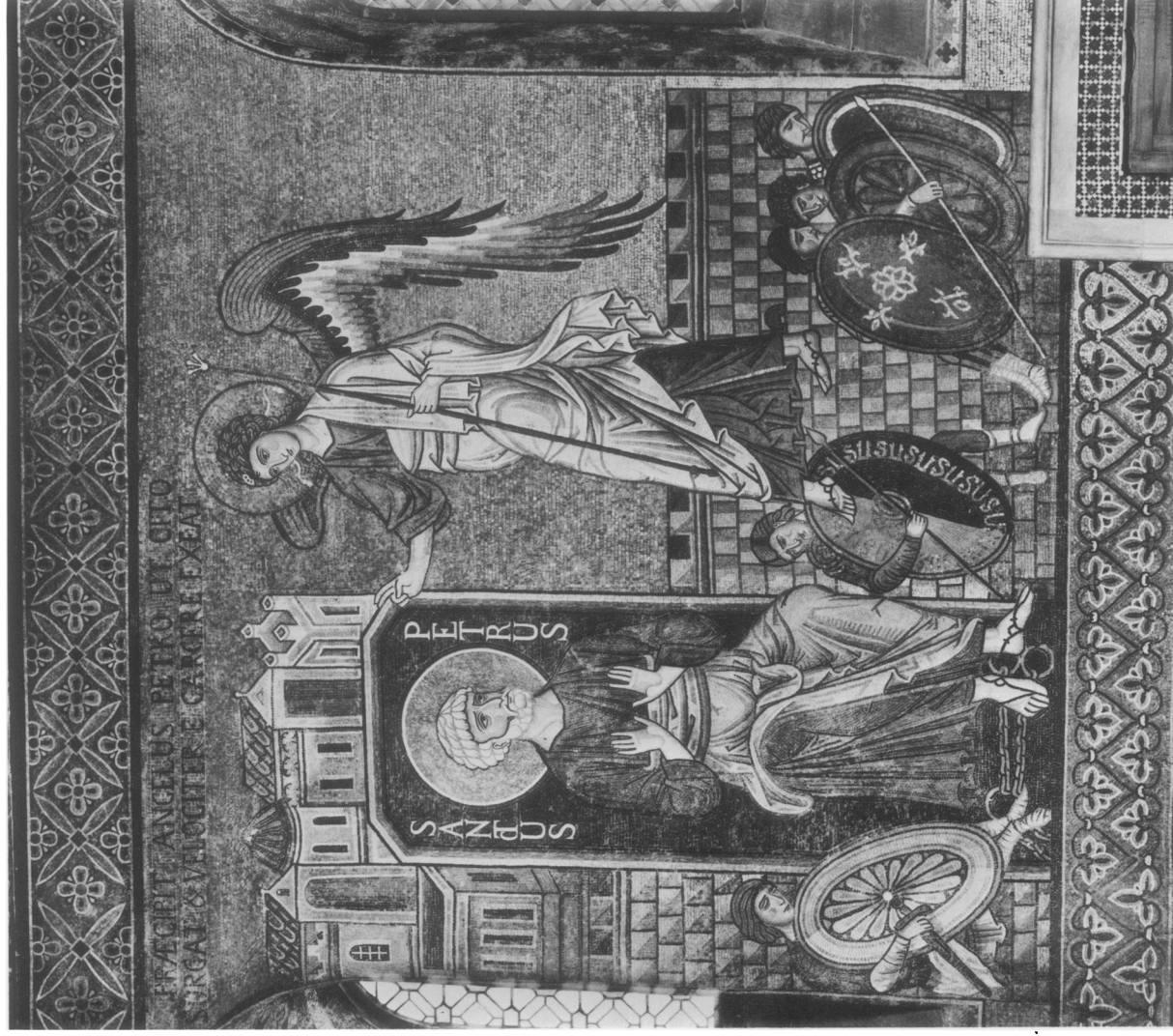
5. Monreale, Cathedral. Mosaic (after Gravina)



6. Monreale, Cathedral. Mosaic (after Gravina)



7. Chicago, University of Chicago Library. Rockefeller McCormick
New Testament, fol. 119v



8. Palermo, Cappella Palatina. Mosaic

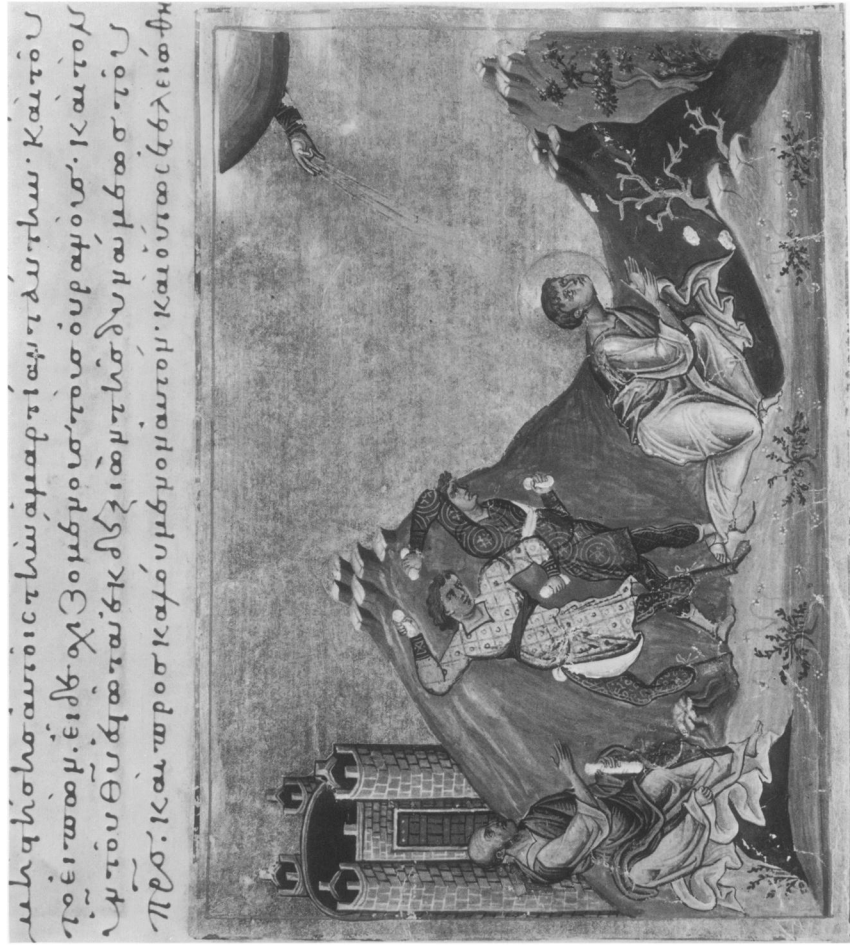


9. Paris, Bibl. Nat., gr. 510, fol. 32v, detail,
Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus



10. Vatican, gr. 1613, p. 185, *Menologion* of Basil II

Beheading of St. James



11. Vatican, gr. 1613, p. 275, *Menologion* of Basil II



12. Vatican, gr. 699, fol. 82v, *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes

Stoning of St. Stephen



13. Fol. 170v, *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes, Stoning of St. Stephen



14. Fol. 170r, *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes, Laying of Coats before Saul